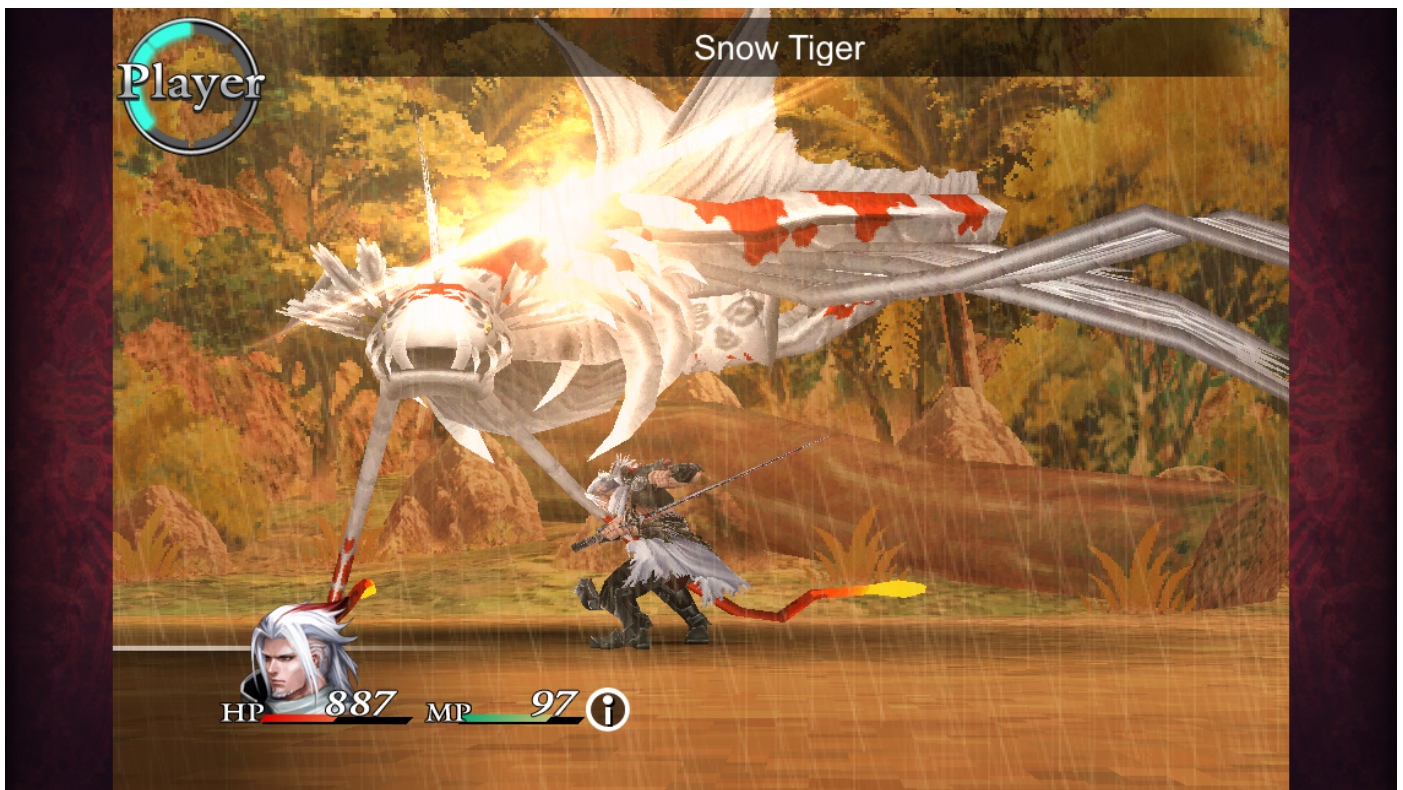


RPG Reload File 044 – 'Chaos Rings Omega'

[June 25, 2015](#) by [Shaun Musgrave](#)



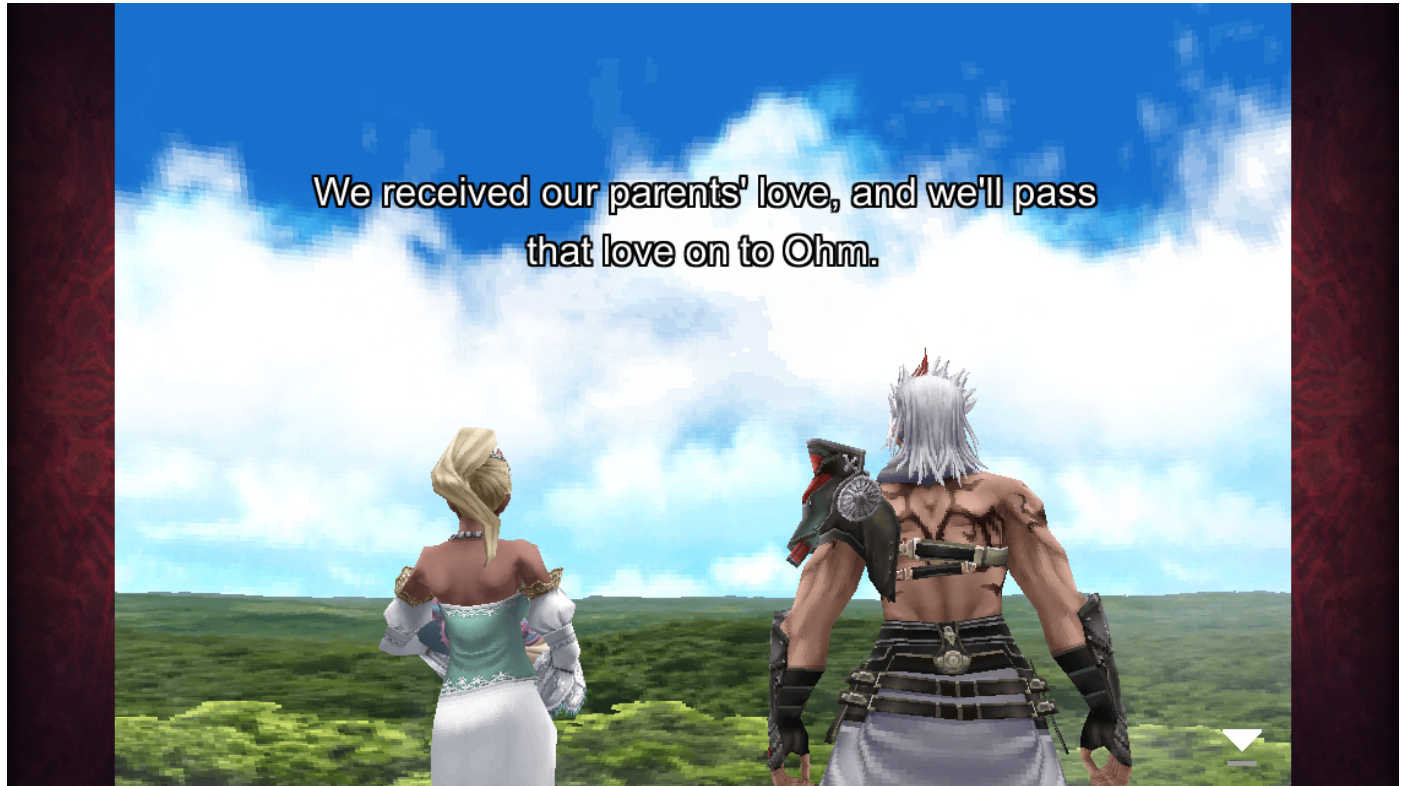
Hello, gentle readers, and welcome to the **RPG Reload**, the weekly feature where we make the very most out of the assets we have. Each week, we take a look at an RPG from the App Store's past to see how it's doing in the here and now. It's a chance to revisit old favorites, reflect on their ultimate place in iOS's history, or just to take a deeper dive than our review typically allow for. I try to present a balanced plate from this admittedly wide genre from week to week, but I'm always open for suggestions. If you have a game in mind that you'd like to see featured, simply comment below, post in the [Official RPG Reload Club thread](#) in the forums, or tweet me at [@RPGReload](#). After next week, there's only one regular reader's choice **Reload** left, so if there's something you're dying to see, now's the time! Next week, we'll be talking about *Sorcery!* ([\\$4.99](#)), a request that came in via our Twitter account. Good times ahead!



When I started off the **RPG Reload** feature last August, the very [first game covered](#) was Square Enix's *Chaos Rings* ([\\$6.99](#)). I'd like to say it was meant to be a poignant example of RPGs on the App Store, but the truth is that I had recently replayed it and wanted to talk about it. Got you folks good, didn't I? As we march towards the close of the first year of this feature, I thought it would be a good time to revisit the next game in the series, *Chaos Rings Omega* ([\\$6.99](#)). It was pure luck that Square Enix chose to release the English version of *Chaos Rings 3* ([\\$19.99](#)) recently, but hey, I'll take it. I think of all the games in the series, *Omega* probably has the worst reputation. I can kind of see why, but I think the game is far better than it gets credit for. The problem is that, like too many RPGs, its finer qualities are only visible to those who stick with it for a while. *Chaos Rings Omega* pulls off a very interesting narrative trick, but its initial ruse is perhaps a little *too* effective.

Chaos Rings Omega was announced in the Japanese gaming magazine Famitsu in April of 2011, approximately a year after the extremely successful launch of the first game. Interestingly, the very same issue also revealed *Chaos Rings 2* ([\\$14.99](#)). I'm not sure Square Enix could have done a better job of hammering home that *Omega* was meant to be a filler title to hold over

players until the proper sequel arrived. The game was described as a prequel and was said to be releasing the following month. Surprisingly, the English version hit at almost the same time as the Japanese version, on May 19th, 2011. All of the principle staff from the first game returned, including artist Yusuke Naora, writer Yukinori Kitajima, and composer Noriyasu Agematsu.



The developers weren't the only returning elements, however. The game itself heavily reuses assets from the first game, including backgrounds, monsters, character models, stage layouts, and even the basic premise. Most of the new content was tilted towards the end of the game, which means that for anyone who only played the first half or so, the game probably felt like something of a shameless cash-in. I don't think there's any doubt that this game was given peanuts for a budget, but it sure managed to make some nice peanut butter anyway. What do you do when the bulk of the team is working on the actual sequel but you're nevertheless tasked with creating something to tide fans over?

The trick starts from the moment you begin the game. Upon tapping to start, you're presented with a scenario choice screen just like the one in the first

game. There's only one couple to choose at the moment, Vieg and Vahti. Hopefully, you'll remember Vahti from the first game, and it's not hard to suss out that Vieg is our sour old friend Olgar. In the first game, they mentioned it wasn't the first time they had competed in the Ark Arena's contest, so I suppose that's the story we're playing now. After selecting them, you're once again brought to the Ark Arena, where the greatest warriors compete for the prize of immortality. It looks just the same as you might remember from the first game. Piu-Piu's over on the left selling his goods, there are rooms on the right to rest in, and a big, ominous door in the center. As in the first game, the premise of the contest is quickly explained by the Agent, who presides over everything.



Once again, we have multiple couples in play. In addition to Vieg and Vahti, Ayuta returns from the first game, with a different partner named Kushina. Vahti's parents, Olgar (!) and Rachel are also in attendance, and the group is rounded out with an odd couple named Cyllis and Yorath. At this point, you're probably guessing the game's chief drama will result from the fact that only one couple can win the tournament, and as we know it to be Vieg and Vahti, that means Vahti's parents will have to die at some point. It's not a

bad guess. As in the first game, one of the contestants decides to challenge the Agent right then and there. Instead of being an expendable character, however, it's the hot-headed Vieg himself. Olgar is always fixing for a fight and decides to join him. The Agent manhandles them, but before the Executioner can do its job, Vahti and Rachel step in to defend them. The Agent doesn't want to lose half the contestants before the tournament even starts, so he decides to let it go for now.

Did I mention Vahti's pregnant? That throws one of the first wrenches into the script. She goes into labor and is unable to join Vieg for very long in his search for the rings. Since Rachel wants to stay behind and take care of her, that leaves Vieg and Olgar to team up to find all of the needed items. Okay, well, that's different, but once you head into the first level and find it to be identical to one from the previous game with a simple weather filter added on top, and start actually playing the game and seeing that nothing has changed from a mechanics point of view, it doesn't end up feeling like much of a swerve. Fight monsters, collect genes and gene plates, level up, solve some annoying puzzles. It starts to feel like you're repeating a game that already had you repeat it twice. I suspect a lot of people lost interest at this point.



Return with the needed items, and the first set of matches is announced by the Agent. Ayuta and Kushina will face Cyllis and Yorath, which means, horror of horrors, Vieg and Vahti will have to face Vahti's parents in a battle to the death. But Vahti's ready to have that baby, so the whole thing is put off for a few hours while the child is born. This is a cute moment where we get to learn a bit more about the other characters before many of the pieces are swept away. In the end, the baby is born, and everyone is happy until the Agent cuts in to remind them about that whole duel to the death thing. Vahti and Rachel are left out of it, so Vieg has to face Olgar on his own. It's when you land that final blow on Olgar that the game finally branches into its main point, because he's not the kind to go quietly into the night. The Executioner comes to take him, and things don't quite go as expected. Over in the other match, Cyllis and Yorath are triumphant, but that too ends in an unexpected way.

From here on out, *Chaos Rings Omega* grabs its own identity and runs with it. The whole contest is completely and utterly derailed, setting off a plot where the heroes have to jump through hoops for a different villain while trying to figure out their motivations. Again, we know the ending – Vieg and

Vahti must survive and "win" their immortality, Vahti's parents cannot survive, and the Ark Arena and its inhabitants must be free to carry on their work for the future. But things definitely don't go as planned. The final dungeon, which is the only one unique to Omega, is a gorgeous bit of art whose monsters carry terrifying implications for the rest of the things you've battled on the Ark. It's possible you won't realize that until one of the last fights, but once you do, it's actually kind of horrifying. Along the way, Vieg will take Olgar's name, and if you happen to go back to the scenario select screen at this time, it will have changed to reflect this. Still no new couples, though.



That's the way it remains, actually. Vieg and Vahti's story is the only one in *Chaos Rings Omega*, which makes sense given the reason why we had so many different points of view in the first game. That really couldn't happen here. Depending on your preferred length for games, you might be happy or disappointed to learn that Vieg and Vahti's story isn't much longer than a single scenario from the original game, so you'll probably be seeing the credits after about seven hours. Like the first game, most of the challenge is found in the very beginning and the very end, with the middle being almost

brain-dead easy. If you let the story get itself going, though, it's hard to stop until you get to the end. It's pretty well-written on its own merits, though it does introduce a few plot holes when the first game is taken into account. It also completely (and kind of nonchalantly) spoils the major shockers in the original game, so you might want to be careful about playing this one before the original despite its chronological place in the series.

Once you finish the game, you unlock a hilarious Extra mode that is positively packed with content. In this version of the game, Piu-Piu is running the show, and he wants you to complete his collection by seeking out objects in the various levels. For each completed sheet, he will grant a wish. In this mode, you're competing against Garrick and Alto, who you may remember as the couple that got almost immediately killed off in each of *Chaos Rings's* scenarios. They stick it out here, and they make for entertaining rivals. Each time you face them, they'll make a lame excuse for their loss, and the next time you meet, they'll be overcompensating for whatever they had previously blamed. The whole tone of this extra mode is extremely refreshing, actually. The developers are very upfront about it being a bit of silliness, and it almost immediately starts skewering and deflating the somewhat serious tone of the main game. The elder Olgar owns up to the nature of the Extra mode when you first talk to him, saying it all seems like a lot of pointless busywork, and it kind of is.



The Extra mode has several special bosses and culminates in a battle against Piu-Piu himself. You'll probably need to be somewhere around at least level 150 to beat him, which should tell you just how much grinding you can look forward to. Still, I admire the developers adding in such a humorous and lengthy chunk of game just as a free extra. I didn't have the patience to see it all the way through this time, but I did it once, and while it was indeed a grind, it wasn't a totally unpleasant one. After a relatively simple main story, it was nice to have some challenge, and I liked that I could choose my partner whenever I wanted to switch around. I mean, you shouldn't, because it's more work for you, but it's good to have options.

Interestingly, much of that Extra mode came to the game after its release. Square Enix doesn't usually do the whole regular update thing with their paid titles, but *Chaos Rings Omega* got several months worth of support. After that, it's only updated to fix things when they break, but they've at least been pretty good about that with this particular series of games. The most recent update came in November of 2014, fixing iOS 8 compatibility and filling in the borders on larger displays. Unfortunately, it's as scarce on bells and whistles as its predecessor, so don't expect things like MFi controller or

iCloud support. The latter would be greatly appreciated given the rather large file size this game carries, but it doesn't appear to be in the cards. It's also worth mentioning that this game comes from the era where Square was doing separate apps for iPad and iPhone.



Ultimately, I think *Chaos Rings Omega* is a pretty sharp design from developers who know how to work within their means. They could have just done a simple retread of the first game with some new couples, maybe seeding in a few bits of the lore for the next game. I'm pretty sure that's what anyone would have expected them to do, and what I believe many who didn't play far into the game walked away thinking. Instead, they pull one heck of a swerve, using the repetitive nature of the original game to lull you into a believing you know where things are going, then yanking the rug out from under you repeatedly for the next few hours. That canny high concept, mixed with the generally excellent plotting and character work from Kitajima makes for a game that is far better and considerably less cynical than it has any right to be. If it's looked at as a true sequel to *Chaos Rings*, I can see how people would be disappointed, but taken as a chaser to the original title, I think it's nearly pitch-perfect.

That's just what I think about *Chaos Rings Omega*, though. What do you think? You know what you have to do, friends. Comment below, post in the [Official RPG Reload Club thread](#), or tweet me at [@RPGReload](#) with your thoughts on the game. Eric Ford, Andy Fretz, and I will be recording the next episode of the **RPG Reload Podcast** this weekend, and *Chaos Rings Omega* will be the featured title. If you have any questions about it or any other RPG that you'd like us to answer on the show, please leave those in the usual places or email us at rpgreloadpodcast@gmail.com. As for me, I'll be back next week to talk up a storm about Sorcery!. Thanks for reading!

Next Week's Reload Hint: *By your request, it's Sorcery!*